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ABSTRACT

This teaching unit is designed to introduce elementary school students to traditional Chinese celebrations in Taiwan. An introductory activity asks students to distinguish between various kinds of celebrations (traditional or modern; religious or secular), and to identify U.S. and Chinese examples of each kind. The body of the unit concerns four well-known traditional Chinese celebrations: Lantern Festival, Tomb Sweeping Day, Dragon Boat Festival, and Moon Festival. The material on each celebration contains an introduction, historical background, information on present-day activities pertaining to the celebration, discussion questions, and a student activity. The unit also provides background information on Taiwan, the script for a slide presentation on the celebrations, and suggestions for further reading. (DB)

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Traditional Chinese Celebrations: Continuity and Change in Taiwan

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Introduction

This teaching unit introduces students to traditional Chinese celebrations in Taiwan. The rationale for the unit may be summarized as follows:

To encourage students to explore traditional Chinese celebrations through different facets, such as history, customs, religious practices, foods, and games.

To help students understand traditional Chinese celebrations and their significance to their participants.

To help students discern commonalities and differences between Chinese and American celebrations.

The introductory activity guides students to distinquish between various kinds of celebrations (traditional or modern; religious or secular in origin), and to identify American and Chinese examples of each kind. The body of the unit consists of four well-known Chinese traditional celebrations: Lantern Festival, Tomb Sweeping Day, Dragon Boat Festival, and Moon Festival. The focus here is on both the history and the present-day activities of these celebrations. Each celebration is followed by a student activity. A script for a slide presentation depicting these celebrations in Taiwan today concludes the unit.

The unit is designed for elementary level classes but is adaptable for middle school. Teachers should be able to select sections and activities appropriate for their classes. Background reading on Taiwan is also included at the beginning of the unit.

Background on Taiwan

Taiwan (the Republic of China), is located southwest of Japan, and a hundred miles off the southern coast of the China mainland (the People's Republic of China). As an island of 13,814 square miles, Taiwan's has an area that is slightly larger than Massachusetts amd Connecticut combined. Historically and culturally, Taiwan has been an integral part of China, but through much of its history the island has been also subject to foreign influences. In 1624, the Dutch invaded the island and established a trading station. Two years later, the Spanish occupied coastal areas in the north, but were driven out by the Dutch in 1641. In 1661, the Dutch were in turn driven out by the Chinese. In 1886, Taiwan formally became a province of China. After China's defeat in the first Sino-Japanese War in 1895, Taiwan was ceded to Japan and was not restored to China again until the end of World War II in 1945.

Taiwan has a population of 18.5 million (about the same as the state of New York), which makes it one of the most densely populated areas in the world. Its capital and largest city is Taipei, with a population of over two million. The people of Taiwan are comprised of many ethnic groups. The three most prominent groups are the aborigines, the native Taiwanese, and the emigres from the mainland. The aborigines are descendents of the ancient Miao peoples of southern China and the peoples of Southeast Asia, and it is believed that they settled in Taiwan in prehistoric times. The Chinese began arriving on the island in the twelfth century, but it was not until the seventeenth century that there was a large movement of settlers. The descendents of these Chinese are now commonly referred to as Taiwanese. The third group came to Taiwan in 1949. With the establishment of a communist government on the mainland, Chiang Kai-shek led the nationalists to Taiwan to continue the Republic of China.

Taiwan's diversity is reflected in the number of different religions that the people observe. The most popular are Confucianism and Taoism, followed by Buddhism, Christianity, and Islam. It should be noted that the mainland Chinese who went to Taiwan in 1949 brought with them their customs and traditional ways of celebrating festivals, which are somewhat different from those of the Taiwanese. Today in Taiwan, these festivals are celebrated much like they were in mainland China prior to 1949.

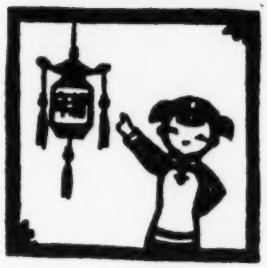
Although only a quarter of the island is arable, agriculture continues to be an essential component of

Taiwan's economy. Improved land utilization and management, as well as mechanization, have enabled the agricultural sector to sustain an average annual growth of 4.2% over the past two decades. Not only has it been able to meet domestic demand, but increased production has also produced surplus for export, making a major contribution to Taiwan's early stages of industrial development. Taiwan's main crops include rice, sweet potatoes, sugar, citrus fruits, bananas, and pineapples. As it is surrounded by the East China Sea, the South China Sea, the Taiwan Straits, and the Pacific Ocean, Taiwan boasts a flourishing fish industry as well.

Taiwan is, however, primarily an industrializing society. This fact can be clearly seen in Taiwan's foreign trade; in 1952, industrial products accounted for only 8% of Taiwan's exports, whereas in 1983 they accounted for 92.2%. Recently, heavy industry and chemical industries have grown more rapidly than light industries. Coal, crude oil, and natural gas are among the major industrial products. Taiwan's major exports include machinery, textiles, clothing, wood and plastic products. Major imports are machinery, chemicals, transportation equipment, foods, and oil.

Foreign trade can be truly considered the "lifeline" of Taiwan's economy. Despite the fact that less than two dozen countries still maintain official relations with the island. Taiwan has trade relations with almost 150 nations. Nearly all Western countries maintain semi-official delegations in Taipei. In 1980, Taiwan began trade relations with five communist countries in Eastern Europe: Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia, Poland, Hungary, and the German Democratic Republic. These trade relations terminated Taiwan's long-standing policy of banning trade with any communist country. The United States has been Taiwan's largest trading partner since 1970; it is Taiwan's leading export country, and it also supplies 24% of Taiwan's imports. Trade with the U.S. alone exceeded $15 billion in 1983. Except for two brief trade deficits in 1974 and 1975, Taiwan has enjoyed continuing trade surpluses since 1970. Taiwan's per capita income in 1982 reached $2,342, second only to Japan in all of Asia.

Introductory Activity



Time: 15-20 minutes

Objectives: Students will:

- o learn that there are different kinds of celebrations.
- o differentiate between those celebrations that are ancient and those that are modern (twentieth century) in origin.
- o differentiate between those celebrations that are related to religious or secular events.

Materials: chalkboard, chalk. Optional: pictures of American celebrations from which the teacher can elicit responses.

Procedure: 1) Explain to the class that there will be a class discussion on the different kinds of celebrations. Ask students which celebrations they observe. List their answers on the chalkboard.

2) Add to the list any of the following celebrations which have not been mentioned already:

New Year's Day
George Washington's Birthday
Abraham Lincoln's Birthday
Martin Luther King Day
Easter
May Day
Memorial Day
Independence Day
Labor Day
Halloween
Thanksgiving
Christmas

3) Ask students if they can think of ways of

distinguishing different kinds of celebrations. Then, on the board draw a matrix similar to the one on the next page. Tell students that we are going to try to group our list of celebrations according to whether their origins are traditional or modern (twentieth century), religious or secular. Note that there may be other ways of identifying different kinds of celebrations. (See "Answer Matrix" on the next page.)

4) Tell students that we shall be studying about some Chinese celebrations. Point out to them that while there are also traditional or modern, religious or secular Chinese celebrations, the ones in this unit are traditional ones. They are: Lantern Festival, Tomb Sweeping Day, Dragon Boat Festival, and Moon Festival (put these on the board). A few examples of modern Chinese celebrations, many of which remind one of modern Western ones, include National Day, Children's Day, and Sun Yat-sen Day (father of modern China). Also include these in the matrix.

Note: Of course, not all celebrations in Taiwan are celebrated on the Chinese mainland (see Introduction to Taiwan), and vice versa. However, all the Chinese celebrations mentioned above are celebrated on both sides (each has its own National Day). Also, common Western celebrations (for instance, Christmas and New Year, but not Halloween) may be celebrated to differing degrees in China and Taiwan.

Answer Matrix

	SECULAR	RELIGIOUS
TRADITIONAL	New Year's Day George Washington's Birthday Abraham Lincoln's Birthday May Day July 4th Lantern Festival Dragon Boat Festival } Taiwan Moon Festival	Easter Christmas Thanksgiving Day Halloween (Holy Evening) Tomb Sweeping Day } Taiwan
MODERN (20th century)	Martin Luther King Day Labor Day Memorial Day National Day Women's Day Youth Day } Taiwan Sun Yat-sen	

Lantern Festival

Theme: The approach of Spring.

Time: Around mid-February

Introduction:

The Lantern Festival is a festival celebrating the return of light, spring, and the lengthening day. For over 2000 years the Lantern Festival has been celebrated on the fifteenth day of the New Year, the night of the first full moon. The festival celebrates the departing of the spirits at the close of the New Year's festivities. In ancient times people, aided by the light of the moon and torches, tried to see and guide the spirits on their way. Torches were soon replaced by simple and eventually elaborate lanterns to add to the merriment of the occasion.

Historical Background:

During the seventh century, on the fifteenth day of each New Year the Emperor's palace was filled with singing, performances and much merriment. The palace was open, allowing the people to view the lanterns created for the royal family and the court. Lantern making was also popular among the people and lanterns were displayed at individual residences for all to enjoy.

From the thirteenth to the sixteenth of the first month of the New Year, the city gate would not be tended and people from the countryside would go into the city to see the lanterns, and people in the city would go outside the city to enjoy the beauty of the first full moon, the mountains and the streams. It was believed that if you went out and walked during this time you would be healthy and happy for the year.

Present-day Activities:

In Taipei, on the night of the Lantern Festival, young children often dress in scary costumes and parade about in front of family, friends and within their neighborhood carrying plastic store-bought lanterns.

The special food eaten during Lantern Festival, yuan hsiao, is a dumpling made of sticky rice and filled with either a sweet or salty filling.

Lanterns can be handcrafted out of wood, bamboo, wire, silk, cloth, paper, candles, electric lights or a variety of other materials. Many temples in Taipei display intricately designed lanterns which are donated by various individuals, businesses or merchants. Hanging below each lantern is a riddle, and on the night of the Lantern Festival there is a contest to try to solve the riddles. A riddle might be:

A bright red flower he wears on his head!
His beautiful coat needs no thimble nor thread;
And though he's not fearsome, I'll have you know,
Ten thousand doors open when he says so!
What is it?

(Answer: A rooster. From: Johanna T. Chao, Echoes of China: Chinese Celebrations, Student's Guide, Greater Boston Chinese Cultural Association, 1979, p.55.)

In smaller temples, instead of donating lanterns, merchants, businesses or families can buy a red candle. The candles are placed on a long rectangular rack and on the night of the Lantern Festival the candles are all lit and the racks are carried in a procession in the streets.

The themes of the lanterns vary from legendary folk heros, prominent people in history and animals, such as dragons, elephants, goats, mice, etc.

lanterns: provide light to see and guide spirits on their way until the next New Year season.

yuan hsiao: a glutinous rice ball, shaped like the full moon, filled with either a sweet bean paste or a salty paste served hot.

Research Questions:

Is the Lantern Festival similar to any festival that we celebrate? (Halloween) In what ways?

Students can research the background of Halloween. How has the meaning of Halloween changed over time?

PAPERCUTTING: A STUDENT ACTIVITY

Introduction:

This activity is a relatively simple one that is performed by many students in Taiwan.

Papercutting is a folkcraft which has been handed down from generation to generation in China. Today, papercutting continues as a folkcraft in Taiwan and mainland China.

Papercuts are especially associated with festive and sad occasions. Red-colored papercuts add to the festivities of celebrations such as New Year's, the Dragon Boat Festival, birthdays, and the Moon Festival. White, yellow or subdued colored papercuts are used on sad occasions such as Ching Ming and funerals.

The Chinese character "spring" (春), is an important symbol during the New Year season, and especially for the Lantern Festival. In ancient China after suffering through the long cold winter months, with no fields to tend and dwindling food, the farmers would welcome the Lantern Festival, for it meant the approach of spring, warm weather and the planting of new crops. Spring symbolized warmth and new life to ancient Chinese. During this season many people decorated their homes with red colored papercuts in designs of the characters spring, prosperity, long life, surplus, or of flowers, animals and their young, etc. Today red papercuts still brightly decorate windows and walls of homes and storefronts, lending to the festivities of the New Year season.

Papercutting

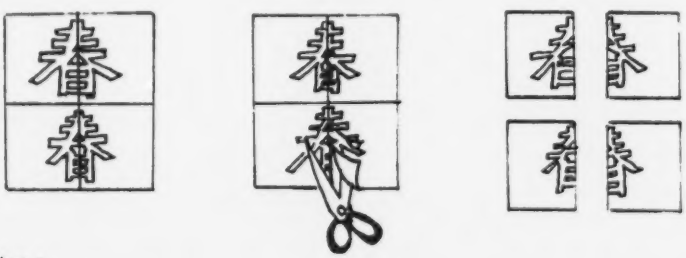
Time: 40-50 minutes

Objective: to cut a papercut of the Chinese Character "spring" (春)

Materials:
1) xeroxed patterns
2) scissors
3) paper:
   a) 5 1/2 x 8 1/2 inch red construction paper or any paper of the same weight or lighter
   b) 8 1/2 x 8 1/2 inch square pieces of constrasting colored paper to mount the papercut on after it has been cut, preferrably a heavier paper than the papercut

Procedure:

Teacher: The character "spring" has been written twice on the next page. After the page has been xeroxed, cut it into fourths, producing four patterns.



For the Students:

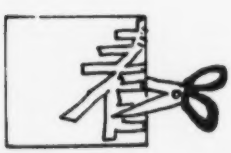
1) Hand out the red paper, have the students fold the paper in half.

2) Pass out one pattern to each student.

3) Place the pattern with the slashes //// on the fold of the red paper.

4) Staple the pattern to the folded paper.

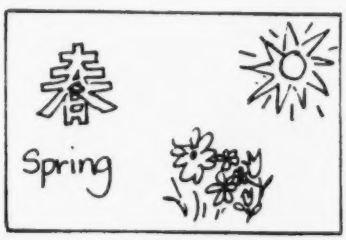
5) Begin to cut the small spaces then work toward the larger ones. DO NOT CUT the //// areas!



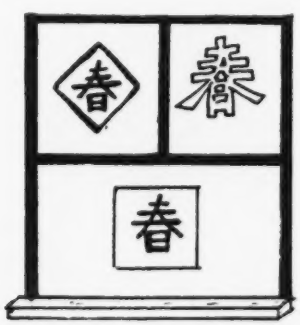
6) When finished cutting, open and press flat with a book for about an hour. Paste the finished papercut onto a square piece of contrasting colored paper like:

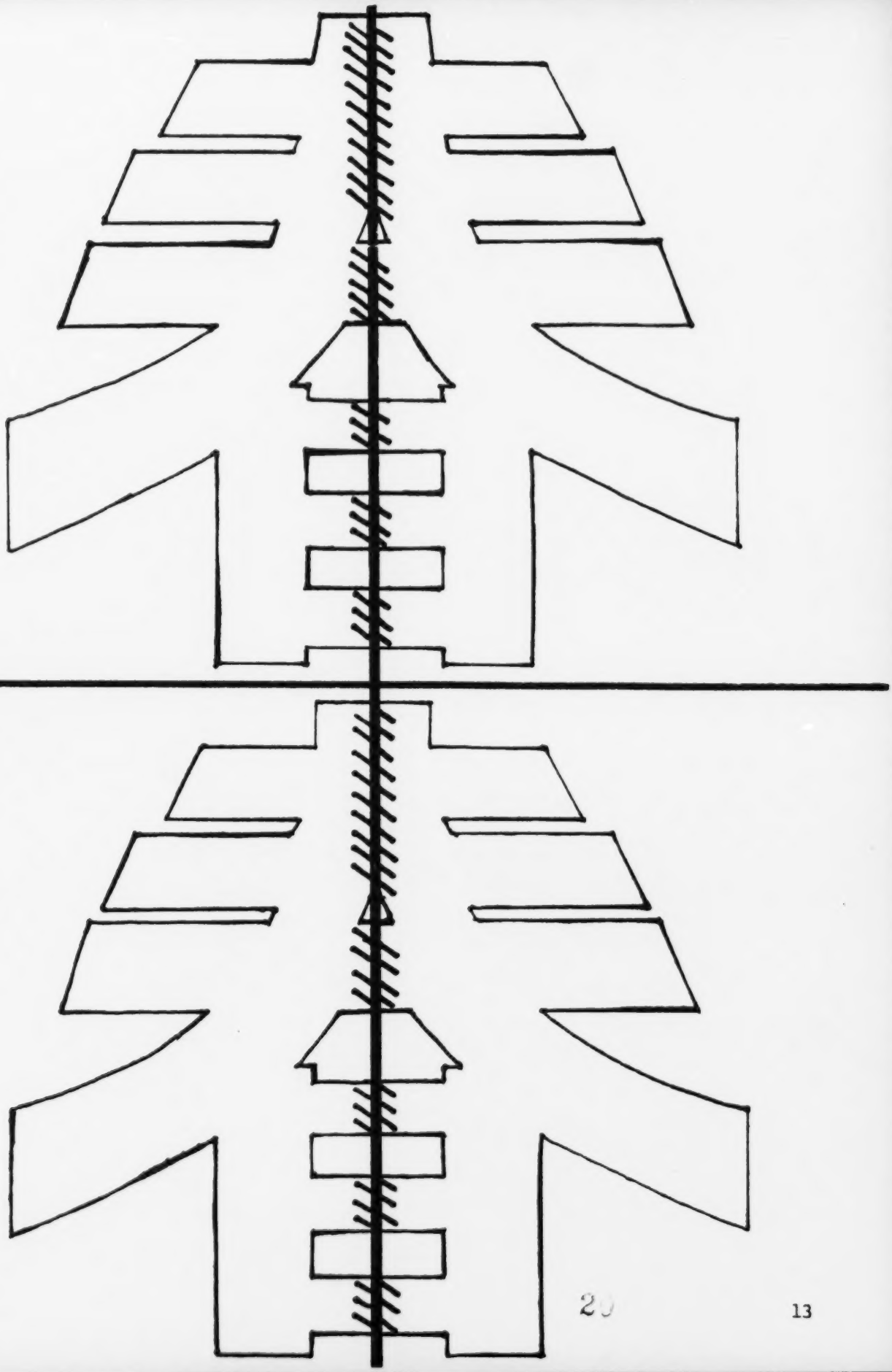
Suggestions:

A. Instead of mounting the papercut on a small square of paper, mount it on a larger piece. Write the word "spring" beneath the papercut or ask the students what symbolizes spring to them and have them draw, paint, etc., that onto the same piece of paper.



B. The papercut can also be glued to windows as decorations, as was done in ancient China.





Tomb Sweeping Day

Theme: Remembrance; a time for honoring the deceased members of the family.

Time: Around the beginning of April but celebrated throughout the month depending on when each individual family has time to visit the ancestral tomb.

Introduction:

The Chinese have celebrated the Ching Ming festival for nearly 2000 years. Ching Ming occurs in early April during a season of reappearing warmth, clear skies, fresh cool air, and blossoming plants and flowers. The season marks an awakening of nature, the earth is revived and ready for new planting, and man begins to plan for the new year. In looking toward the future, Chinese also reflect back on their forebearers--their reason for their existence. During April often times whole families gather together for an outing to the countryside to honor their ancestors at their tomb sites. The family members join in to clear the dirt and overgrown grasses, sweep the tombstones, display the prepared foods, and think about their lives and those who were responsible for them.

Historical Background:

During Ching Ming the ceremony at the tomb site often involves prepared foods brought from home. This practice began some 2500 years ago. In ancient China, during the Ching Ming festival, the countryside was dotted with families carrying prepared foods, incense, and candles enroute to or returning from their outings to the ancestral tombs. Two or three generations in a family might have gone together to pay their respects and enjoy the beauty of the season.

Present-day Activities:

Now, much like in ancient times, families gather to visit the tomb site of their ancestors. The family may bring with them prepared foods, such as chicken or pork, vegetables, canned foods, cakes, candy and rice wine. Upon arriving at the tomb, all participate in clearing away weeds, cutting and trimming bushes, sweeping dirt, repairing the tomb, and paying their respects. After all this is done, if the prepared food is brought, it is set out on the tomb, candles may be lit and paper money may be burnt in an offering to the ancestors. After the food is ceremoniously offered, it is later eaten, often times stories are related about past relatives or incidents.

paper money: some believe the burning of paper money is a sacrifice for the dead, so they might not suffer from poverty in the next world.

colored paper money: in Taiwan, some families before leaving the tomb site, cover the mound with colored paper money held down with rocks or clods of earth, which serves to verify that the tomb has indeed been visited by descendents of the deceased.

willow branch: is placed above the door during the Ching Ming festival. The willow, because of its hardiness and its tender green leaves is an emblem of vitality and a talisman against evil. As a talisman, it was most likely used to protect those who went to the countryside to sweep and clean the tombs against snakes, centipedes, and other harmful animals and insects that might be in and around the tombsite.

Discussion Questions

Discuss the following questions with students:

1) When you think of spring what do you think of?

2) In the springtime everything is fresh and new. Why do you think the Chinese reflect upon the past? How does it relate to the present and the future?

3) What are some ways that family history and tradition are passed on?

4) How do you remember an old friend or relative? By some action or what the person has said?

REMEMBERING AND APPRECIATING SOMEONE:
A STUDENT ACTIVITY

Introduction:

The major theme of the Ching Ming Festival is remembrance. To remember who you are, where you came from, relatives past, present, and significant events and people, are important to some Chinese in passing on family history. In looking at ourselves there are family, relatives, friends or acquaintances who have played important parts in our lives. By recording who these people were, why they were important, and why we remember and appreciate them, we can start our own personal history. In this activity students will have an opportunity to write about a person that they remember and appreciate. The people the students write about may still be active in their lives, someone they were close to before but not now, or someone they met once. Depending on each individual, each will have someone to remember and write about.

Time: 1 hour

Objective: To write a description of someone that you remember and appreciate.

Materials: paper, pencils or pens

Procedure: Have the students write a paragraph or more about a person that they remember. Describe:

- the person, your relationship to them (i.e., how you know them, how you met, etc.)
- your feelings about the person
- what you did with that person (i.e., activities, outings, etc.)

- how the person influenced you or had some effect on your life.
- why you appreciated their friendship or company
- what was important about your friendship or relationship
- what you enjoyed doing with the person
- how you remember the person, what makes you remember the person (i.e., the person bought you your first bicycle, etc.)
- how you would create a tradition of remembering and appreciating a person

Dragon Boat Festival

Theme: Patriotism

Time: Early June

Introduction:

The Dragon Boat Festival commemorates the death of the Chinese poet and revered official, Chu Yuan in the 3rd century B.C. This festival is one that involves the whole community. In anticipation of the relentless hot and humid summer days ahead, the community comes out in force to watch the dragon boat races and to enjoy the last cool spring days. Delicacies are prepared to share with all during this festival season.

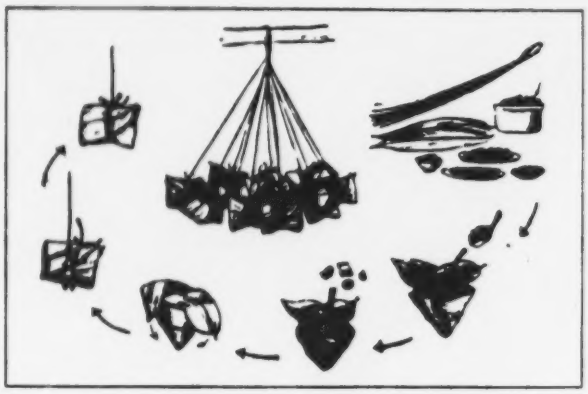
Historical Background:

Dragon Boat Festival originated around the third century B.C. The story concerns a patriotic poet and official, Chu Yuan who urged his fellow officials to work toward a strong and united government. His appeals went unheeded and Chu Yuan became very frustrated and disillusioned with the government. One day while boating, he took his own life. He threw himself into the water and drowned. Those on shore who witnessed the incident, raced out on boats to try to recover Chu Yuan. The people searched but could not even recover his body.

To appease Chu Yuan's spirit and not let it hunger, every year on the anniversary of his death his faithful friends made rice dumplings and dropped them into the water where he had drowned.* One night he appeared in a dream telling his friends to tie the rice dumplings with brightly colored straw because the dragons of the river were eating the rice dumplings and they were timorous to bright colors and noise.

In ancient times, every year on the anniversary of Chu Yuan's death, rice dumplings would be tied with bright colors, and boats decorated like dragons would race out to the place where Chu Yuan drowned. With flags waving and gongs clanging, the rice dumplings would then be dropped into the water for Chu Yuan.

* Some believe that the rice dumplings were dropped into the water so that fish would eat them instead of Chu Yuan's body.



Process of Making Rice Dumplings

Present-day Activities:

When the dragon boat races take place in Taipei, families make an outing to Tamshui river to cheer on the rowers and see the beautifully decorated boats. The rice dumplings are not dropped into the river but are eaten by all.

rice dumplings: are made at home or bought at the store. Rice dumplings are made of glutinous rice filled with roast pork, black mushrooms and lotus seeds or a black sweet bean paste, then wrapped in bamboo leaves and tied with straw. When ready to eat the rice dumplings are steamed leaves and all, for about 20-30 minutes. Many families exchange rice dumplings as recipes vary.

dragons: represent strength and power and are the emblem of vigilance and safeguard. In ancient times, some Chinese believed that there were dragons for bodies of water, such as the ocean, rivers and streams. A possible explanation for the use of the dragon on boats in ancient times, is that if someone rode in a dragon boat on the water, then they would be protected by the dragon of the water from any harm.

drums and gongs: in ancient times during the dragon boat races, the drums and gongs were believed to be used to drive away evil spirits and also drive away the river dragons, as they were frightened by noise, so that Chu Yuan's spirit could eat the dumplings. Drums and gongs used nowadays help the rowers keep the beat and also add to the excitement of the festivities.

sachet: people in ancient times carried little, often intricately embroidered cloth packets of herbs on their bodies for protection. This was actually a custom confined to children and wedded and pregnant women to protect them from the diseases of the summer season. Nowdays they are carried by women and children as something pleasing to smell during the hot and sultry days of summer.

jade: is often worn by Chinese and believed by some to help absorb shock from an accident or absorb sickness and disease, in short, to absorb anything harmful to a person. During the Dragon Boat Festival season one can see many people wearing pieces of jade in all sizes, around their neck or on their wrists, tied with a bright red string.

Discussion Questions

Discuss the following questions with students:

1) How does the Dragon Boat Festival unite the community?

2) Do we have a holiday celebrating a person's deeds? (Martin Luther King)

3) How are they remembered?

CREATING A FESTIVAL: A STUDENT ACTIVITY

Introduction:

The Dragon Boat Festival is a festival created around a patriot. The rice dumplings and dragon symbols are inherent in Chinese culture and beliefs and thus became integral parts of the festival. In American history there are many patriots who died for their country, one of which was Nathan Hale. The stories of both Chu Yuan and Nathan Hale, although occurring in different cultures, have the common aspects of loyalty and patriotism. Why not create a celebration, as the Chinese did around an Amerian patriot? Integrate American symbols, foods, beliefs, and customs and create a festival in honor of Nathan Hale.

Time: 2-4 days

Objective: Write a letter to the mayor proposing a Nathan Hale Festival

Preparation:

Teacher: Relate the following story to the students.

Nathan Hale

During the American Revolutionary War, Nathan hale, a school teacher from Connecticut, was a captain in the Continental Army. Late in the summer of 1776, during the battle between the British and American troops over New York City, Nathan Hale volunteered to enter New York City to spy on the British.

On his way back to the American lines to report, he was captured by the British as a spy. Facing his hanging the following day, his last words were: "I only regret that I have but one life to lose for my country."

Discussion: How is this story like the story of Chu Yuan?

What do the two people have in common?

I. Write to the Mayor

Write a letter to the Mayor of your town/city, suggesting a Nathan Hale Festival:

1) Describe the Nathan Hale story

2) Explain why it is important

3) Suggest what the festival should be like

4) Try to convince the Mayor of the importance of having this celebration

II. To help in writing a proposal for a Nathan Hale Festival consider the following:

- o when will it be celebrated?
- o what symbols will be used? (i.e.: Christmas tree, turkey, pudding, etc.)
- o will it be a parade? an exhibition?
- o will there be entertainment?
- o will it have activities, games, contests?
- o what kind of decorations will there be?
- o will it be religious or secular?
- o what foods will represent the festival?

Moon Festival

Theme: Reunion

Time: Around mid-September

Introduction:

The Moon Festival has been celebrated by the Chinese for more than 2000 years. It falls during the time of year when the weather is neither cold nor hot, the skies are nearly cloudless, and the moon is most beautiful, clear, bright, and round. Farming families of ancient times having passed through a cold winter and a hot summer, have harvested their crops, and it is time to unite the family and enjoy the fruits of their labor and the beauty of the moon.

Historical Background:

Four thousand years ago during Emperor Hou-I's reign, he lived off the hard laboring people. Living quite extravagantly, he took as much away from his people as he could to support his lavish life style. The people were thus left with little to eat and no hope for a better life as long as he reigned.

The Emperor enjoyed his luxurious life and hoped it would never end. He came upon the idea of attaining immortality and sought out a priest and related to him his desire. Wishing to please this powerful Emperor, the priest presented him with a pill of immortality. When the people found out that the Emperor possessed a way to immortality, they were greatly distressed. The people sought the help of the Emperor's most beautiful wife, Chang-Erh, for she detested the Emperor's tyranny. When told of the pill, Chang-Erh decided to free the people of the Emperor by stealing the pill.

When the Emperor found out, in desperation Chang-Erh swallowed the pill. Immediately she became light as a swallow and found herself soaring toward the moon. To this day Chang-Erh lives on the moon. The people were very grateful to Chang-Erh for saving them from the Emperor's rule, so every year during the Moon festival they celebrate the beauty of the moon and Chang-Erh's great deed.

Present-day Activities:

In Taipei today the Moon Festival still retains some of its old traditions. Although many families are no longer farming families, they still gather together, coming from all parts of the island to celebrate with the family. At this time all feast on moon cakes and the many delicacies made during this festival, enjoy the good weather before the winter and most of all share stories about the moon and its beauty.

moon: the roundness of the moon symbolizes unity and perfection in Chinese culture. This is reflected in a preference for many things made in that shape. For instance, the round table reflects unity and a coming together. It also allows one to be able to see everyone and be close to all. The fullness of the moon at this time of year also reflects the harvest, a time of plenty.

moon cakes: are made of a flaky pastry and the filling varies depending on the recipe. Some moon cakes are filled with black or brown sweet bean paste and preserved duck eggs.

The story of the moon cakes took place during the 13th century, when the Mongols ruled China. The Mongols levied heavy taxes on the Chinese, demanding hard work and many sacrifices from them. Communication between large groups of Chinese was severely restricted so as to suppress any activity for an uprising.

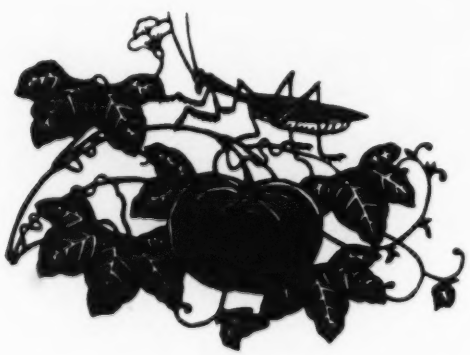
The severity of the Mongol rule rose to a peak around the Moon Festival one year. A small group of Chinese, knowing that people would be allowed to go out and buy moon cakes for the festival devised a plan, they placed small pieces of paper inside the moon cakes. The message on the paper told of the time and place of the revolt. The moon cakes were then passed along to family and friends. Having received the messages in the moon cakes the people united and overthrew the Mongol dynasty. From this time on moon cakes, because of their roundness and this incident, symbolized unity for the Chinese.

Discussion Questions:

1) Why do you think the shape of the moon symbolizes unity?

2) As a festival that stresses family reunion, do we have a festival that is associated with harvest time and is similar to the Moon Festival? Thanksgiving Day.

3) Compare Thanksgiving to the Moon Festival, in what ways are they similar? In what ways are the celebrations different? Also compare the symbols, food and festivities involved.



FAMILY REUNION: A STUDENT ACTIVITY

Time: 2-5 days

Objective: describe a family reunion

Materials: chalkboard, chalk, paper, pencils or pens

Procedure: 1) As a class discuss the holidays that are considered family gatherings or reunions and are practiced in America (immediate or extended family gatherings), write them on the board, such as:

Thanksgiving
Christmas
New Year's Day
Easter
Independence Day
weddings
birthdays
graduations, etc.

2) Besides these, what other festivals do you celebrate as family reunions? Encourage the students to share the different festivals that their individual families may celebrate. (i.e.: Yom Kippur, Japanese New Year, St. Patrick's Day, etc.) Write down some of the activities that occur during these gatherings. Discuss why they occur?

3) Discuss what makes a reunion. What characterizes a reunion? (the presence of certain people, foods, etc.) Add these remarks to the activities on the chalkboard.
4) Ask the students to write about one of the holidays discussed where a family reunion takes place. Describe:

o Who comes (immediate or extended family--cousins, aunts, uncles, etc.)

o Where does it take place - is it always at the same place? if not why?

o Do people travel far?

o Are special foods made - what traditional foods, if any?

o Activities that take place

o Does everyone sit at the same table? (barbeque, picnic, etc.)

o How does the reunion compare and contrast to the Moon Festival reunion?

Suggestions:

A. Students of different cultures can illustrate a family reunion festival from their country.

B. As a research project, a group of students can present to the class a description or reenactment of a reunion-based festival from another culture.

C. Photographs can be collected or drawings can be done to illustrate these reunions. Then the photographs or drawings can be hung on bulletin boards with arrows pointing to who is who and what is occurring during the reunion.

Script for Slide Presentation

Lantern Festival

Slide 1: Neighborhood store

Brightly colored plastic lanterns hang around the front of this neighborhood store attracting many shoppers. What shapes can you distinguish?

Slide 2: Temple Lanterns

This neighborhood temple displays intricately made lanterns donated by merchants and businesses. The temple is opened to the public so all may admire the lanterns. The fish lantern is a symbol of surplus, the deer, that of longevity, and the dragon represents power and strength. Below the dragon to the right is a giant incense burner where people can place their lit incense sticks and pray.

Slide 3: Elephant Lantern

What is this elephant lantern made of?
(wooden spools, colored paper, colored foil, wire, glue, bamboo, etc.)

Slide 4: Red Candles on Racks

Instead of lanterns, in some small neighborhood temples merchants can purchase candles. The candles are placed on racks and then on the night of the Lantern Festival they are lit.

Tomb Sweeping Day

Slide 5: Tombstone

How does this tombstone look different from western style tombstones?

Do you think this tomb has been visited by relatives recently? Why or why not?

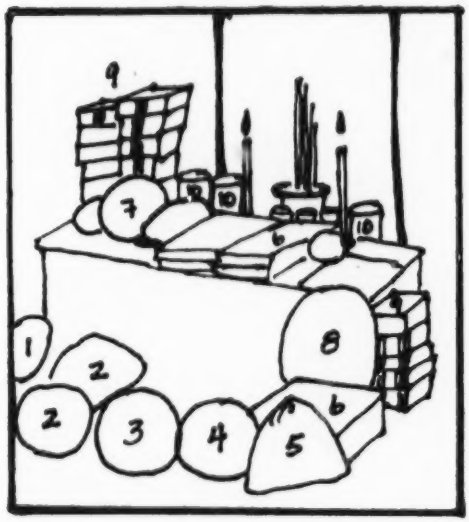
Slide 6: Man Burning Paper Money

The man is burning paper money in honor of his ancestors. Some Chinese believe the money can be used by their ancestors to buy things to eat in the next world.

Slide 7: Cold Food Offerings

What foods can you identify?

1. bananas
2. mountain apples
3. oranges
4. tomatoes
5. dried fruit
6. pastry
7. watermelon
8. longevity buns
9. paper money
10. canned soda drinks



Note the mound of dirt behind the tombstone, on top are different colored pieces of paper held down by rocks or clods of dirt. This signifies that relatives have come and visited the tomb.

Slide 8: Paying Respects

After cleaning the tomb of overgrown grass and sweeping away any debris, the family gathers together to pay their respects. From the oldest to the youngest each bow before the tomb in remembrance of their ancestors.

Dragon Boat Festival

Slide 9: Dragon Boats

The festively colored dragon boats with drums in their bows are awaiting the races.

Slide 10: Three Dragon Boats

The race has started and on shore people are crowded together, some using umbrellas to shade themselves from the harsh summer sun.

Slide 11: Middle of the Race

Well into the race, the rowers are all in unison, the crowd overflows into the river and the excitement reaches a peak.

Slide 12: Near the Finish

Nearing the end the person in the foremost position leans far over the bow of the dragon's head to ready himself to grab the flag and finish first!

Moon Festival

Slide 13: Temple Market

Prior to the Moon Festival, the temple grounds are abundant with vendors selling foods, clothing and household goods.

Slide 14: Moon Cake Store

Prices for moon cakes are written on the posters on the wall. Red and gold colored tin boxes line the walls in back of the counter ready to be filled with purchased moon cakes.

Slide 15: Close-up of Moon Cakes

These moon cakes are filled with a black sweet bean paste.

Slide 16: Family Portrait

How many generations do you think are represented here?

Notes

The Chinese Lunar calendar is based on the moon's movement, unlike the Gregorian calendar which is based on the sun's movement. The lunar calendar consists of twelve months of twenty-nine days each. When these months fail to make up the 365 days of the year, the Chinese add a leap month. After 30 lunar months, a whole month is added at any time of the year except before the first, eleventh or twelfth months. The leap month is just a repeated month, making the leap year thirteen months long. In the Gregorian calendar dates of traditional Chinese festivals vary from year to year. The dates, according to the Lunar calender, of the four celebrations discussed here are:

Lantern Festival:	First month, fifteenth day
Tomb Sweeping Day:	Third month, fourth day
Dragon Boat Festival:	Fifth month, fifth day
Moon Festival:	Eighth month, fifteenth day

Further Reading

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